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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA'S PLANS TO
REHABILITATE AND REINTEGRATE FORMER LTTE COMBATANTS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The rehabilitation and reintegration of former LTTE combatants will be crucial if Sri Lanka is to achieve sustainable reconciliation. With the launching this past week of a National Framework Proposal for Reintegration of Ex-Combatants, and the recent appointment of Major General Daya Ratnayake as the new Commissioner General of Rehabilitation in the Ministry of Justice, the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) seems to have resolved the issue over who should lead the rehabilitation efforts in the North. The exact number of former combatants to be rehabilitated remains unclear. Military and civilian sources generally use a figure of 10,000 ex-combatants who are currently housed in 13 overcrowded rehabilitation facilities in Vavuniya District, most in public buildings. However, in meetings with Embassy officials, Defense Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa indicated that he expects the number of ex-combatants to climb to 20,000 once the security screening process of the IDPs is completed. Positive steps are being taken by the GSL but a number of issues need to be addressed before an effective program of rehabilitation and reintegration can be launched. End Summary.

RECENT ACTIONS BY THE GSL

12. (SBU) The GSL announced recently that responsibility for rehabilitating former LTTE combatants in the North would fall under the Ministry of Justice and newly-appointed Minister of Justice, Milinda Moragoda. Last week the GSL announced that the Commissioner General for Rehabilitation portfolio would be assumed by an active service member, Major General Daya Ratnayake, seconded to the Ministry of Justice. The Commissioner General, however, will report to the Minister of Justice through Secretary of Justice Suhada Gamalath.

13. (SBU) At the same time, Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights Mahinda Samarasinghe has led a five-month long process to develop a National Framework on Reintegration of Ex-combatants, with assistance from the International Labor Organization (ILO). This quote National Framework Proposal for Reintegration of Ex-Combatants into Civilian Life in Sri Lanka unquote was launched officially in Colombo

on July 30. The Framework has the goals of safeguarding the human rights of the ex-combatants; contributing to sustainable peace, reconciliation and social cohesion; and increasing the employability of ex-combatants. Development of the framework engaged members of the UN agencies and a wide spectrum of GSL ministries, including the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Defense was not fully engaged in this effort.

BUILDING ON EXISTING PROGRAMS TO GO FORWARD

¶4. (SBU) While ILO provided technical assistance for development of the Framework Proposal, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the international agency on the ground with relevant experience in other countries and an ongoing program in the East, funded by USAID, for 1,000 former TMVP combatants. The IOM program in the East is based on an information, counseling and referral service (ICRS) model which matches the needs and aspirations of the former combatants with appropriate services through a registration process and development of a database. This model has been successfully implemented in other parts of the world and ensures that recipients are connected with the training and employment opportunities most appropriate to them. The mapping process in the East has been completed and the first recipients are beginning to receive small grants through this program.

¶5. (SBU) The IOM's productive relationships with the

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Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Justice, the two key government stakeholders involved, means it is well placed to work with the GSL on assisting with the former LTTE combatants in the North. The GSL estimates 5-10,000 ex-combatants are still in the IDP camps, mostly Manik Farm, who must be identified and separated from the other IDPs. The need to identify these additional ex-combatants is likely slowing the overall returns process. ICRC earlier had registered the ex-combatants in the 13 temporary facilities. The Ministry of Defense has officially requested in writing IOM's assistance in the North to set up rehabilitation facilities and to register and profile the 10,000 former combatants who are housed in 13 temporary sites in Vavuniya.

¶6. (SBU) Charge convened a meeting July 31 with representatives of the Governments of Japan, Australia, Norway, UK, and the Netherlands, as well as the acting country representative of IOM and the USAID Director to discuss the government's plans for the rehabilitation of ex-combatants. All recognized the importance of the rehabilitation of ex-combatants and some may be able to provide assistance, although currently only the UK has concrete plans to provide funding to IOM. During the week of August 10, the Minister of Justice plans to hold a meeting of potential donors at which it is anticipated that the GSL will present a plan that would include a timeframe, benchmarks, and funding requirements.

POSSIBLE U.S. SUPPORT FOR REINTEGRATION OF FORMER COMBATANTS

¶7. (SBU) Post,s recently approved Section 1207 proposal for the North includes more than \$7 million for reintegration of former combatants; however these funds are not yet available.

IOM has requested that \$80,000 from the USAID grant for the East be reprogrammed so that they can begin the process of registering ex-combatants in the North as soon as possible. However, USAID legal counsel has advised that the current Material Support Memo and the OFAC waiver for the rehabilitation work in the East will need to be amended to include the new rehabilitation work in the North, and Post is providing the relevant information to the Bureau so that this process moves forward.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: The creation of a national framework, the appointment of the new Commissioner General for Rehabilitation, and the MOD request for IOM assistant are positive steps taken by the GSL to move forward on developing mechanisms and a plan to rehabilitate and reintegrate the former LTTE combatants. The Justice Minister, Justice Secretary, and Commissioner General for Rehabilitation are highly competent and are well known to post. Several issues, however, require resolution. First, the remaining combatants need to be removed from the IDP camps. Second, a decision must be taken regarding how the families of former combatants will be handled as they are regarded as a group in need of special consideration given their elevated status within the LTTE hierarchy. Third, resources will need to be mobilized.

19. (SBU) Post is considering providing support for registration, vocational training, and psycho-social rehabilitation, among other activities. Post does not plan to provide support for the physical infrastructure of the demobilization facilities. While IOM will play a key role in rehabilitation, post is also aware of the importance of ICRC access to the surrendeers in the North. In early July, the ICRC was instructed to close its operations in the East. The ICRC plays an important role in independent protection monitoring, family unification, and providing assistance to surrendeers and post will continue to advocate with the GSL for the ability of the ICRC to exercise this mandate. END COMMENT.

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